

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 1847

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, KS; PFOR, PDEV, KS, KN

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER DISCUSSES CURRENT ISSUES

BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING LONG LUNCH MARCH 23 PRIME MINISTER DISCUSSED YUN IL YONG AFFAIR, ECONOMIC PLANS, ORGANIZATION FOR CONDUCT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS, AND SOUTH- NORTH DIALOGUE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO HAS HAD RECENT HEALTH PROBLEMS, WAS LOOKING MUCH BETTER THAN LAST TIME I SAW HIM. IN ADDITION TO SEVERE CASE OF FLU HE HAS HAD NERVE PROBLEM WHICH HAD INDUCED SOME EATING PROBLEMS AND TEMPORARY NUMBING OF UPPER LEG. HE HAS RESPONDED WELL TO TREATMENT RECOVERING, DOCTOR SAYS, TWICE AS FAST AS IS NORMAL FOR THIS NEUROLOGICAL PROBLEM.
 2. PM ASSURED ME THAT THERE WOULD BE NO REPERCUSSIONS FROM YUN PIL YONG AFFAIR. THOUGH AS DEPARTMENT KNOWS THERE IS RIVALRY BETWEEN PM AND YI HU RAK, PM EMPHASIZED THAT YI HAD NO INVOLVEMENT. YUN' S DOWNFALL WAS DUE NOT ONLY TO INDISCREET COMMENTS ABOUT PRESIDENT, BUT ALSO EXCESSIVE INDULGENCE IN PARTIES AND OTHER IMPROPER COMPORTMENT AS WELL AS AN INVOLVEMENT WITH A BUSINESS LEADER. PRESIDENT WAS LIVID. HIS OWN BATTALION COMMANDERS BLEW THE WHISTLE ON YUN. PM SAID HE WOULD BE DISMISSED FROM ARMY BUT NOT SURE WHETHER HE WOULD BE TRIED.
 3. PM TALKED AT LENGTH ABOUT ADMINISTRATION' S PLANS FOR
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CONDUCT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS.

A. IN MEETING WITH DRP AND REVITALIZATION GROUP REPS
MARCH 22, PRESIDENT AGREED TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PLENARY
SESSION FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS IN MAY DURING WHICH GOVERNMENT
WOULD EXPLAIN, AND TAKE QUESTIONS ABOUT, RECENT GOVERNMENTAL
CHANGES INCLUDING THE MANY LAWS PASSED BY STATE COUNCIL.
PRESIDENT HAD RULED OUT COMMITTEE MEETINGS IN THE INTERIM
ON THE GROUND THAT LATTER WOULD ONLY INVOLVE QUESTIONING
OF MINISTERS WHO WILL INSTEAD DEFEND GOVERNMENT ACTIONS
IN PLENARY SESSION. PM SAID PRESIDENT THOUGHT IT
HEALTHY TO LET THE OPPOSITION HAVE CHANCE, WITHIN LIMITS,
TO AIR SOME OF ITS GRIEVANCES.

B. PM WILL NOW CHAIR REGULAR WEDNESDAY LUNCH MEETING
WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF DRP, RG, AND APPROPRIATE
MINISTERS INCLUDING YI HU RAK, WHICH WILL ORGANIZE MAJOR
PROGRAMS THEN TO BE SUBMITTED FOR PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL.
PRESIDENT WILL CHAIR REGULAR BI- WEEKLY MEETING WITH THE
CABINET AND REPS OF DRP AND RG. AMBITIOUS NEW PLANS FOR
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, WHICH WILL BE DESCRIBED SEPARATELY,
WILL BE MANAGED FROM THE PRIME MINISTER' S OFFICE WITH
ASSISTANCE FROM MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO KU TAE HOE
AND DPM. I GET THE IMPRESSION PRESIDENT HAS DELEGATED
MORE OF HIS POWERS THAN I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED AND THAT
IF SYSTEM WORKS AS HE OUTLINE IT, PM' S POSITION WILL BE
GREATLY ENHANCED. THIS MAY PERHAPS BE PRESIDENT' S WAY
OF RESTORING BALANCE BETWEEN PM AND YI HU RAK. LATTER' S
POSITION IN ESTABLISHMENT HAS BEEN WIDELY REGARDED IN
RECENT MONTHS AS STRONGER THAN PRIME MINISTER' S.

C. IN PARTY AFFAIRS THE DRP WILL TAKE THE LEAD AND THE
REVITALIZATION GROUP (RG) WILL FOLLOW.

4. ON SOUTH- NORTH TALKS, PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSED VIEW
THAT KIM IL SUNG IS NOW BACKING AWAY FROM TALKS TO
DIMINISH HIS PERSONAL ASSOCIATION WITH PROJECT WHICH
HARDLINERS IN THE NORTH DON' T LIKE AND PRESUMABLY IS NOT
GOING AS ORGINALLY INTENDED. PYONGYANG WAS STILL
PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN SECURING POLITICAL AND
MILITARY OBJECTIVES THROUGH TALKS, PRINCIPALLY THE
WITHDRAWAL OF UN AND US PRESENCE, AND WOULD NOT BE IN
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ANY HURRY TO AGREE TO NON- POLITICAL EXCHANGES WITH THE

SOUTH. PM FELT, HOWEVER, NORTH WOULD NOT BREAK OFF THE
TALKS.
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